

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Previously Presented) A method of forming a powder and/or discrete gel particles of a compound selected from the group of a metallic oxide, a metalloid oxide, a mixed oxide, an organometallic oxide, an organometalloid oxide, an organomixed oxide resin, and/or an organic resin from one or more respective organometallic precursor(s), organometalloid precursor(s) and/or organic precursors and mixtures thereof; comprising the steps of:
 - i) passing a gas into a means for forming excited and/or unstable gas species;
 - ii) treating said gas such that upon leaving said means the gas comprises excited and/or unstable gas species which are substantially free of electrical charges at a temperature of between 10°C and 500°C;
 - iii) introducing a gaseous and/or liquid precursor which has not been subjected to steps (i) and (ii) into said excited and unstable gas species in a downstream region external to the means for forming excited and/or unstable gas, interaction between said precursor and said excited and unstable gas species resulting in the formation of a powder and/or discrete gelled particles; and
 - iv) collecting resulting powder and/or discrete gelled particles,
wherein the gaseous and/or liquid precursor is an organic compound or a mixture of organic compounds or a mixture of organic and organosilicon compounds.

2. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 1 wherein the means to generate excited and/or unstable gas species is an electrical discharge apparatus.
3. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 1 wherein the liquid precursor is treated by the excited and/or unstable gas species resulting therefrom, in a container.
4. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 3 wherein the container is a fluidised or circulating bed.
5. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 4 wherein the gas comprising excited and/or unstable gas species is utilised as the gas in the fluidised or circulating bed for suspending powders, discrete gel particles and/or droplets of liquid.
6. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 1 wherein the liquid and/or gas precursor is in the form of a liquid compound, a solution of a high viscosity liquid or solid compound in either a liquid carrier or a liquid co-reactive and/or a molten solid.
7. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 6 wherein the liquid precursor is introduced into the excited and/or unstable gas species in the form of an atomised liquid.
8. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 7 wherein the atomised liquid is introduced into the excited and/or unstable gas species by direct injection.

9. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 1 wherein the liquid and/or gas precursor is an organometallic compound of titanium, zirconium, iron, aluminium, indium and tin or mixtures containing one or more thereof.
10. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 1 herein the liquid and/or gas precursor is an organometalloid compound of germanium or silicon.
11. (Cancelled)
12. (Currently Amended) The method in accordance with claim [[11]]1 wherein the organosilane is a functionalised silane containing one or more ~~organie~~functional groups selected from the following alkenyl, aryl, H, OH, amino groups, aldehyde groups, alkyl halide groups, alkyne groups, amido groups, carbamate groups, urethane groups, organic salts, carboxylic acid groups and their derivatives, heterorganic groups containing boron atoms and/or phosphorus atoms, mercapto and sulphido groups; grafted or covalently bonded amino acids and/or their derivatives, grafted or covalently bonded proteins, enzymes and DNA.
13. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 10 wherein the organometalloid compound is an organopolysiloxane having a viscosity of from 0.65 to 1000 mPa.s.
14. (Canceled)
15. (Previously Presented) The method in accordance with claim 1 wherein subsequent to preparation, said powder and/or discrete gelled particles are treated on

one or more occasions with an excited and/or unstable gas species and/or one or more functionalising precursors.

16. (Cancelled)
17. (Cancelled)
18. (Cancelled)
19. (Currently Amended) [[The]]A powder and/or discrete gel particles in accordance with claim 16 comprising of an organic resin obtained in accordance with the method of claim 1.
20. (Cancelled)
21. (Cancelled)
22. (Cancelled)
23. (Cancelled)
24. (Cancelled)
25. (Cancelled)